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THE WORK OF THE DEMOCRATIC HOUSE

BY CHAMP CLARK

THE Democratic House has, during the extraordinary session of Congress, made a record so excellent as to surprise its friends and dumfound its enemies. Its superb discipline, its industry, its demonstrated capacity for work, its unanimity on all great questions, seems to be exceedingly pleasing to the masses of our people. For years we had been sneered at as a party of mere negation, as being absolutely without the faculty of constructive statesmanship. The House has taken away from the party that great reproach, and in four months has passed more constructive legislation than any House has passed in the same length of time in two decades. This has utterly amazed our Republican friends who had really worked themselves up to believe that we could do nothing, even if we had a majority. We have kept the faith; we have fought a good fight; we have redeemed or are in process of redeeming every promise we made in order to win the election in 1910. Most emphatically the House of Representatives is justified by its works.

The principal promises on which we won the election were these:

First, to pass a resolution submitting a Constitutional

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amendment providing for the popular election of United States Senators. So far as the House is concerned that has been done.

Second, to pass a bill compelling the publication of campaign expenses before the election. That too has been done.

Third, to admit New Mexico and Arizona as two States. That has been done.

Fourth, to revise and liberalize the rules of the House. That also has been done.

Fifth, to revise the tariff downward to a revenue basis. A fine start has been made in that direction. We have accomplished as much in that regard as was possible in the time in which we were in session if it were to be done scientifically and intelligently.

Sixth, to economize in the public expense. We have begun to perform that great task.

When we made these promises they were sneered at by standpat Republicans. They are sneering no longer. All these six things promised were good within themselves. Their redemption marks an epoch in legislative history. There never yet has been a good reason urged against the election of United States Senators by popular vote. There is no more reason why a Representative, Governor, State Senator, constable or any other officer should be elected by popular vote than there is why a United States Senator should be so elected. What is a Senator? He is simply a representative of his constituents—that is, he should be—just as is a member of the House. He has a longer term. The duties of Senators and Representatives are identical, with these exceptions: First, the House, and the House alone, can originate revenue bills; the Senate alone ratifies treaties; the Senate alone votes on the confirmation of Presidential appointees; the House originates impeachment proceedings, sitting as a grand jury, and the Senate, sitting as a petit jury, tries the cases.

The average American—no matter to what political party he belongs—is honest. He believes that elections should be honestly conducted, and that too much money has been spent in recent years in elections. Therefore he has made up his mind to put an end to that degrading and demoralizing practice. Some people believe that this cannot be accomplished, but the majority believe that it can and will be accomplished. Several of the States have passed

measures to prevent corruption in elections. These laws to a large extent have proved beneficial, and the Federal laws on that subject will also prove beneficial. There is a well-authenticated case in the days of Charles James Fox, Burke and the younger Pitt, where one man spent 20,000 pounds sterling for his seat in the House of Commons. Yet in the last Parliament they threw out a member who had several hundred majority because his mother gave a dinner to a dozen of his constituents during the campaign.

By the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo a speedy admission of New Mexico into the Union was promised. Both New Mexico and Arizona have populations larger than several States had when they were admitted into the Union even in recent times. They have been knocking at the doors of Congress for admission for a generation. It is a shame that they have been kept out so long.

When the Democrats and the Insurgent Republicans in the Sixty-first Congress were making their great fight to liberalize the rules it was confidently asserted that the House of Representatives could not be conducted in decency and in order and business transacted with despatch without the despotic system then in vogue. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding these assertions, we have liberalized the rules, we have made the committees elective by the House, we have transacted the public business with despatch and have thoroughly demonstrated the efficacy of the reforms which we advocated. The Committee on Rules has been called on only two or three times to exercise the function of bringing in special rules. The testimony is to the effect that there has never been better order maintained in the House than during this extraordinary session, and this is due, to a large extent, to the uniform courtesy and kindness with which every member of the House, without reference to politics, has supported the new Speaker in maintaining order under the liberalized rules.

Economy, like charity, should begin at home, and that is precisely where the House began to economize. It abolished the offices of some hundred or more supernumeraries, thereby saving their salaries, in the neighborhood of \$200,000 a year, to the people. Of course, as the appropriations had already been made for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1912, before we came in, there has been very little opportunity for economies, and there will not be much opportunity

until we begin on the regular appropriation bills for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1913, but we have made a good start.

The tariff question, like the poor, we have with us always. In its scope and ramifications it is a vast and most intricate subject. We concluded that it was better to revise it schedule by schedule than in a wholesale bill, thereby reducing the evils of log-rolling to a minimum. Our success proves the correctness of our theory. We passed, by a majority of more than two to one, a bill revising Schedule K on wool and woolens. The same is true with reference to our bill reducing the duties on manufactures of cotton. These bills were constructed so scientifically and intelligently as to receive the commendation of the public to an extraordinary degree. We also passed what in popular parlance is called the "farmers' free list bill," curing many iniquities of the Payne bill. In addition to this, we passed the reciprocity bill, every Democrat voting for it except eleven, while President Taft with his enormous patronage could not muster a majority of the House of Republicans for it, either in the Sixty-first or Sixty-second Congress.

We did not invoke a special rule in the consideration and passage of any of these tariff bills. They were thrown open to amendment and debate in every section and in every line, yet in every case the bill passed as it was reported by the Ways and Means Committee and endorsed by the Democratic caucus. The Senate passed the reciprocity bill, Democrats leading the fight and furnishing most of the votes. The Senate, composed of forty Democrats and fifty Republicans, has passed the House bill revising Schedule K, with certain amendments, and also the farmers' free list bill, with a few amendments, every Democrat voting for the wool and woolens bill, and every Democrat except one voting for the farmers' free list bill. At the time of writing the farmers' free list bill and the wool and woolens bill are now in conference with the chances of an agreement between the two Houses on both of them. The House passed the bill reducing the duties on manufactures of cotton by a vote of 202 to 91. Judging the immediate future by the immediate past, the Senate will pass that too, with amendments, and it will go to conference, and an agreement will be had in all human probability. All three of these bills will go to the President for his signature. It would require the powers of vaticina-

tion of one of the greatest of the major prophets to predict what he will do in the premises, and I shall not prophesy in that regard. Except as to some minor matters, this is the record of the Democratic House up to the present writing. It is a magnificent record—one which will give us victory in 1912 and for years to come, because it is on the record that we are making that the battles of the immediate future must be fought.

The House Democrats have not only stuck together during this session, but they have come to have a pride in sticking together. To use a military phrase, the *morale* of the House Democrats is not only surprising but highly beneficial and augurs well for the future. "Judge a tree by its fruits" is a rule established by highest authority. We are willing to be measured by that standard. We would not dodge it if we could, and we could not if we would. We are proud of it, and upon it we confidently appeal to the good sense, fair-mindedness and patriotism of the American people.

In these bills which we have passed we did not go as far as some good citizens and good Democrats thought we ought to go, but, as we were trying to pass bills through the House which we hoped would become laws, thereby ameliorating the condition of the people, instead of playing politics by passing bills through the House which we had no hope of being enacted into law, we had to consider five ordeals through which every bill would have to pass: First, the Committee on Ways and Means; second, the Democratic caucus; third, the House of Representatives; fourth, the Senate; fifth, the President. From the beginning we never lost hope that if the House passed good bills the Senate would agree to them and the President would sign them.

In addition to all this we had to keep steadily in mind the fact that somehow Congress must provide revenue with which to run the Government. No patriotic American wants to see the Government crippled in the full exercise of any legitimate function. Confronted with a Republican Senate and a Republican President and surrounded by the circumstances just set forth, we did the best we could, and, judging from the tone of the public press and from individual expressions of opinion, not only from nearly all Democrats, but from many Independents and many Republicans, we have done well indeed. We have steadily sought what seemed to be the attainable.

One reason why we have succeeded so well is that, at the time when nobody expected an extraordinary session to be called, in order to prepare tariff bills during the period from the 4th of March until the first Monday of December, we called a caucus of the Democratic members-elect to the Sixty-second Congress for the 19th of January, 1911—a thing unprecedented in Congressional annals. This caucus was called for the purpose, chiefly, of selecting the Democratic members of the Ways and Means Committee. Much fun was poked at us for so doing. One of the most brilliant Washington correspondents telegraphed to his paper denominating it as my “crazy scheme,” predicting that few of the new members would attend and that we would break up in a fight. Many prophecies of similar tenor were made by sundry prophets, but, lo and behold! when the night of the 19th of January arrived, out of a total Democratic membership-elect of 227 members, 220 were present, and the other seven accounted for as sick or unavoidably absent. I was unanimously nominated for Speaker at that caucus—the first Democrat so nominated for a first term. The Democratic members of the Committee on Ways and Means were unanimously elected by the caucus after full and free debate, and Oscar W. Underwood, of Alabama, was unanimously elected Chairman of that committee by the caucus itself.

At that caucus the Committee on Ways and Means was empowered to nominate to succeeding caucuses the members of all the committees, with a provision that each committee should elect its own Chairman. All committees were made elective by the House itself. The fortunate fact of having called that caucus on the 19th of January, when we did not expect an extra session and because we did not expect it, enabled us to get things in working order at the earliest possible date, as it gave the Ways and Means Committee two months and a half to select the other committees, and to assemble the statistics and information on which to begin the onerous and important duty of formulating tariff bills. Nobody with a clear conscience can charge us with having proceeded with undue haste in revising the tariff so far as we have gone. It is practically seven months since caucus, and we have proceeded with such circumspection and care that, barring the farmers’ free list bill and the reciprocity bill, we have revised only two

schedules out of fourteen, and we will proceed with the work of revision as expeditiously as possible, all the circumstances considered, until we have accomplished this large undertaking. The fact is well worth noting in this connection, and as showing the trend of public opinion, that, while we have only sixty-five Democratic majority in the House, we have passed these bills through the House with majorities of more than two to one, which means that on each bill some twenty-five or thirty Republicans voted with us. It is fair and just to them to say that they did not vote for our bills because they loved the Democratic party, but because they believed that our bills show great improvements on corresponding portions of the Payne-Aldrich tariff bill. It is equally clear that none of our bills could have been put through the Senate, even with amendments, without the aid of Republican Senators. We welcome aid from these Republican Senators and Representatives, or from any other source, in the righteous work of revising the tariff. Republicans who have voted with us in the House and Senate have demonstrated their love of justice in a most courageous manner.

Another thing which has contributed largely to our success in the House is that the new members are a type of men of an unusually fine order of ability to have come in in a landslide. They have taken hold of the work like veterans and have rendered valuable services. Finally, it is only simple justice to state that, while the House Democrats with their large majority have done remarkably well, our Democratic brethren in the Senate, though laboring under the handicap of being in the minority, are working together and doing so well that the prospects are, for the first time in twenty years, that we will go into a Presidential fight with a united party, conquering and to conquer.

CHAMP CLARK.